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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

October 06, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 4494 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: ECON, ETRD
Captions: None
Subject: UAEG CLARIFIES GCC CONFORMITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR
COUNTRIES EXPORTING TO GCC MEMBER COUNTRIES
Ref: None

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 04494

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CXABU:
ACTION: ECON
INFO: POL DCM P/M AMB
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DISSEMINATION: ECON
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB: MWAHBA
DRAFTED: ECON:CMCRUMPLER
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 004494

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SENSITIVE

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STATE PASS USTR - JBUNTIN
GENEVA PASS USTR

E.O. 12958: DECL 10/06/08
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [WTRO](#) [GCC](#) [USTR](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: UAEG CLARIFIES GCC CONFORMITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
FOR COUNTRIES EXPORTING TO GCC MEMBER COUNTRIES

REF: A) STATE 243476 B) ABU DHABI 3115

11. (U) This is an action request; please see paragraph 4.

12. (SBU) The Ambassador expressed USG interest in developing a constructive dialogue on the specificities of the "GCC Conformity and Certification Scheme for Countries Exporting to GCC Member Countries" and forwarded ref A points in a signed letter to UAE Minister of State for

Finance and Industry Mohamed Khalfan bin Khirbash on
September 9.

13. (SBU) Econoff subsequently contacted Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology Deputy Director Dr. Rashid bin Fahad, who was designated by Dr. Khirbash to craft the UAEG response. Dr. Rashid said that the GCC Certification Program was completely compliant with the UAE's WTO obligations and consequently forwarded the UAE response to ref A questions on September 30. An unofficial, edited translation of the letter follows:

Begin text of letter.

H.E. Marcelle Wahba
Ambassador of the United States of America, Abu Dhabi

Subject: Gulf Conformity Certificate Program for Exporting
Countries to the GCC Countries

We thank you for your cooperation toward our common goals.

With reference to your letter dated September 9, 2003, regarding the "Gulf Conformity Certificate Program for Exporting Countries to the GCC," we would like to inform you that in an effort to secure the public health and safety of citizens and residents of GCC countries, and in order to protect the environment, the GCC agreed to implement certain measures (that do not contradict WTO agreements) that require imported and local products to comply with GCC safety standards outlined by the GCC Customs Union.

In its capacity as the legal standards authority in the UAE and in coordination with other national standards authorities throughout the GCC, the Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology will implement two GCC conformity programs (one each for imported and local products) under the supervision of the GCC Standards and Metrology Authority.

The International Conformity Certification Program (ICCP) for imported products (which is still under discussion by the GCC member countries) is based on internationally recognized procedures and methods. The ICCP was developed using the guidelines of the International Standardization Organization (ISO), and uses internationally accepted procedures for inspection and examination consistent with relevant WTO agreements. These guidelines ensure that the ICCP will be transparent, with clear and simple procedures based on modern technological and electronic methods to facilitate customs inspection procedures at the ports of entry and promote free trade among GCC countries without any technical barriers.

In order to ensure non-discrimination, the GCC countries currently are discussing a proposal to implement an ICCP for local products, whereby products produced in the GCC must conform to certain obligatory specifications and undergo similar procedures to those cited in the ICCP for imported products. This secondary ICCP for local products is necessary to guarantee the free trade of local products throughout the GCC and eliminate the need for inspection and examination procedures at customs check points in GCC countries.

It is worth mentioning here that an experienced international firm accredited (approved) and contracted by the Gulf Standards and Metrology Authority would execute the two ICCPs -- especially the one for imported products. This will ultimately unify all customs procedures among GCC countries, and bring all customs inspections and certifications (literally, certification-granting) up to internationally accepted standards.

The UAE and GCC countries' markets are open and receive products of varying qualities (standards), safety measures, and manufacturing technologies. Considering the potential effect of varying product standards on public health and the

environment, as well as the effect on the industrial and trade sectors, the implementation of the two ICCPs will ensure a high level of safety standards for consumers and simplify the fulfillment of technical specifications for manufacturing companies.

The Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology, through coordination and in consultation with other UAE government offices concerned with trade and industrial affairs, is aware of the UAE's obligation under WTO to ensure the non-discrimination of foreign products entering the UAE, and transparency for exported and local goods. The Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology also is responsible for ensuring the safety of these products for local consumers.

We believe that the implementation of the two ICCPs -- and increasing consumer product safety -- will boost the UAE's position as a regional and international trade hub. The fees charged under the ICCPs are not only reasonable, but also are less than those applied internationally. The ICCPs will not present any significant impediment to the importation of affected products or increase the price paid by consumers for these products -- consumers who also rely on their government to ensure that imported and local products meet minimum safety specifications.

ICCPs have been successfully implemented in many countries in the region, including WTO members Kuwait, Jordan, and others.

Should the UAE implement the ICCPs, the UAE as a member of the WTO would inform the WTO Secretariat of its intent. There would be a transition period prior to the full implementation of the ICCPs providing manufacturers and importers an opportunity to get acquainted with the new requirements and procedures and adjust their situations accordingly.

The proposed ICCPs were developed with noble intentions, and designed simply to better protect consumers and the environment in the GCC. We also aim to increase transparency in trading and commercial deals, and do not in any way intend to create obstacles for foreign exporters or impede free trade.

Based on our belief that cooperation and dialogue with other countries enhances our trade relationships with those countries, the UAE stands ready to discuss with you the ICCP procedures to be implemented. We also believe we can benefit from your distinguished experience in this regard, and work toward a common objective that benefits both of our countries.

Thanking you for your cooperation.

Best regards,

Dr. Mohamed Khalfan Bin Khirbash
Minister of State for Finance and Industry

End text.

14. (SBU) Action request: Dr. Rashid expressed the UAEG's keen interest in meeting with U.S. experts on the margins of the informal meetings of the TBT Committee October 23-24 or the formal meeting of the Committee on November 7. Post requests that USTR please advise on the modalities of setting up such a meeting. End action request.

Wahba